AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1-15 canceled.

16. (Original) A method for decoding time data which defines a point of time for outputting a decoded frame of a video image, the method comprising:

searching a plurality of header information items of each frame for the time data for each frame, the time data being contained in an encoded bit stream obtained by encoding the video image;

determining time data detected from the first one of the header information items as the time data defining the point of time for outputting the decoded frame when time data identical to time data detected from the first one of the header information items has been detected from the second one of the header information items, and when time data identical to time data detected from the first header information item is not detected from the second header information item and time data identical to the time data detected from the first header information item is detected from two continuous items of third and subsequent header information items; and

determining time data detected from the continuous three header information items as the picture time data defining the point of time when the time data identical to time data detected from the first header information item is not detected from the second header information item and has been detected from three continuous items of second and subsequent header information items, and when the time data is not detected from the first header information item and time data detected from three

continuous items of the second and subsequent header information items define identical points of time.

17. (Original) A method according to claim 16, wherein, when a data quantity of a buffer data domain in which the encoded bit stream is stored exceeds a predetermined threshold value, decoded frame time data is advanced by a unit time, and when the data quantity is equal to or smaller than the threshold value, the frame time data is delayed by a unit time.